



City of Loma Linda Official Report

Floyd Petersen, Mayor
Stan Brauer, Mayor pro tempore
Robert Christman, Councilmember
Robert Ziprick, Councilmember
Charles Umeda, Councilmember

COUNCIL AGENDA: January 10, 2006

TO: City Council

VIA: Dennis R. Halloway, City Manager

FROM: Deborah Woldruff, AICP, Community Development Director

SUBJECT: PRECISE PLAN OF DESIGN (PPD) NO. 05-09 - The project is a request to demolish the existing Gentry Gym (approximately 22,500 square feet) and construct a new 148,000 square foot 4-story building that includes laboratories, classrooms, faculty offices, lecture halls, and computer labs on approximately 18 acres and a thermal energy storage tank as Phase I located at northwest and northeast corners of Stewart Street and Anderson Street in the Institutional Zone. Future Phases II and III will include a 157,524 square-foot Learning Center, a 21,257 square-foot student services building, the construction of a three-story parking structure, resurfacing of the existing parking lot, and construction of a central electrical plant substation at the existing Electrical Yard/House Keeping facility.

RECOMMENDATION

The recommendation is that the City Council takes the following actions:

1. Adopt the Mitigated Negative Declaration;
2. Approve PPD No. 05-09 based on the Findings, and subject to the attached Conditions of Approval (Revised December 7, 2005).

BACKGROUND

On October 3, 2005, the Loma Linda University submitted an application for the above referenced project. On October 12, 2005, the project was reviewed by the Administrative Review Committee (ARC).

On November 7, 2005, the Historical Commission reviewed and recommended approval of the project, and found that no Certificate of Appropriateness was necessary.

On December 7, 2005, the Planning Commission reviewed and forwarded a recommendation to the City council to approve the project with minor modifications. The ARC comments and Planning Commission comments have been incorporated into the project. A more detailed analysis of the project is available in the December 7, 2005 Planning Commission Staff Report (Attachment A).

ANALYSIS

During the public hearing process on December 7, 2005, the Planning Commission suggested several changes to the design of the parking lot, front courtyard along Stewart Street and the ingress and egress into the project site. There were also concerns with the visibility of the proposed thermal energy storage tank. The Planning Commission gave direction to staff to work with the applicant to resolve their concerns prior to forwarding the project to the City Council.

Staff and the applicant redesigned the project to address the concerns of the Commission to produce a more “campus feel” for the proposed Centennial Complex. The changes are described below with the comments of the Planning Commission.

Pedestrian Traffic

Commissioner Povero was concerned with the number of students crossing Stewart Street to access southern part of the university campus. The applicant explained that the proposed 4-story complex will house classrooms, lecture halls, faculty offices and laboratories, and that majority of the students that attend classes at this location likely will remain in the new complex. This will minimize or reduce the pedestrian traffic traversing across Stewart Street. Additionally, there are three existing crosswalks between the new complex and the existing campus. The crosswalks are located at the corner of Campus and Stewart Streets, corner of Stewart and Anderson Street (signalized) and at mid-block lined up with the centennial walk that extends northward through the campus to the proposed complex.

After further analysis and discussion, the applicant proposes to install a controlled crosswalk with matching centennial walk street lights at the mid-block crossing on Stewart Street (Condition No. 35). Additionally, the applicant is proposing to provide pedestrian pathways from the parking lot to the controlled crosswalks at the two ends of the project site (corners of Stewart and Anderson Streets and Stewart and Campus Streets). The controlled crosswalk will assist in pedestrian and vehicular traffic movements to and from the new Centennial Complex.

Stewart Street and Campus Street Accesses

The Commission was also concerned with vehicular ingress and egress from both Stewart and Campus Streets. The commission was concerned with the increased traffic generated by this project and how it will affect the overall circulation in the area.

After analysis and redesign, the applicant is proposing to modify Stewart Street driveway. The driveway will be constructed with a turn-pocket to minimize vehicle stacking on Stewart Street and one-way entrance for westbound traffic on Stewart Street. Additionally, to prevent traffic from making a left turn movement from eastbound traffic on Stewart Street and a left turn out of the parking lot, a “peninsula” (raised curb that extends and curves out from the sidewalk) will be

installed with a six-inch curb (Condition No. 53). As a safety precaution, appropriate signage will be posted at and near the access point. (e. g., “Entrance Only”, “No Exit”).

Current ingress and egress on Campus Street will remain a two-way access point to provide a left turn movement (southbound) out of the parking lot. This will allow traffic to move with minimal disruptions and congestion on Campus Street during high traffic hours (mornings and afternoons).

Accessible Parking and Front Courtyard

Commissioner Werner was concerned with the proposed complex being located at the center of the parking lot. He suggested that, if possible, the parking (accessible parking spaces) between the complex and Stewart Street be eliminated and a larger landscaped area (a courtyard) be provided to create more of a “campus” feel. Staff explained that Title 24 of the California Code required certain restrictions as to locations of the accessible parking spaces. The applicant was willing to reconfigure the accessible parking spaces and landscape areas to address the concerns of the commission.

Under the direction of the Planning Commission, staff and the applicant discussed and analyzed the front parking area and concluded that the accessible parking spaces could be moved to the edges of the complex to meet the Title 24 requirements. This would create more landscaped area in front of the complex to address the Commissioner Werner’s “campus” feel concerns. The landscape plan indicates that the courtyard will be outlined with trees and shrubs and a large open lawn area flanking the paved plaza.

Parking

The applicant has redesigned and added parking spaces towards the northeastern corner of the proposed project to provide 1,126 parking spaces for the project. Again, this will add to the overall parking stalls the Loma Linda University is providing for the entire campus at various locations. In Phase II, the applicant is proposing to construct a parking structure at the northwest corner of the Centennial Complex site.

Thermal Storage Tank

The commission had concerns about the thermal storage tank proposed at the rear of the property located at the northeast corner of Stewart and Anderson Streets. Specifically, a the thermal energy storage tank is shown on the plans approximately 75 feet east of the Anderson Street overpass adjacent to the existing Pacific Railroad right-of-way. The tank, approximately 90 feet tall with an 80 foot diameter, will be placed approximately 45 feet in-ground. The applicant is proposing to place the tank approximately 45 feet in-ground to minimize the visual impact on the community. However, the commission requested that a mural or a painted sign be placed on the tank to highlight the City or the University to the motoring public on Anderson Street.

After lengthy discussion with staff, the applicant affirmed that the goal is to hide or visually screen the tank with trees along the west and north sides and to minimize any distractions to the passersby (drivers). For this reason, the applicant is requesting to “hide” the storage tank rather than to draw attention to it with signage or a mural. Additionally, this section of the project area is designed for mechanical use and should be screened to minimize the visual impacts.

Therefore, the public art should be placed at a location more suited for public access and enjoyment.

Precise Plan of Design Findings. According to LLMC Section 17.30.290, Precise Plan of Design (PPD), Application Procedure, PPD applications shall be processed using the procedure for a variance (as outlined in LLMC Section 17.30.030 through 17.30.060) but excluding the grounds (or findings). As such, no specific findings are required. However, LLMC Section 17.30.280, states the following:

“If a PPD would substantially depreciate property values in the vicinity or would unreasonably interfere with the use or enjoyment of property in the vicinity by the occupants thereof for lawful purposes or would adversely affect the public peace, health, safety or general welfare to a degree greater than that generally permitted by this title, such plan shall be rejected or shall be so modified or conditioned before adoption as to remove the said objections.”

The project is consistent with the existing and Draft General Plan Land Use designation (Institutional) and in compliance with the “I” Zone, which permits institutional uses, and related uses. The proposed institutional use is compatible with the existing and future land uses in the surrounding area.

The project will provide improvements in the form of a 148,000 square foot 4-story building to the existing Loma Linda University campus with on-site improvements including parking, lighting, landscaping and other related improvements. Staff recommends approval of the project because it will allow expansion of a higher learning institution for the advancement of medicine as per General Plan Policy Number 3. Also, the project will not adversely affect property values in the vicinity, or unreasonably interfere with the use and enjoyment of nearby properties. The project will not adversely affect the public peace, health, safety or general welfare of the community.

ENVIRONMENTAL

On November 2, 2005, staff prepared the Initial Study pursuant to CEQA and issued a Notice of Intent (NOI) to adopt a Mitigated Negative Declaration. This project was routed to the State Clearinghouse and Planning Unit for a 30-day review for its potential regional significance to the environment. The mandatory CEQA public review began on Monday, November 7, 2005 and ended on Wednesday, December 7, 2005. On December 12, 2005, the city received a letter from the State Clearinghouse and Planning Unit stating that no state agencies had submitted comments. As part of their review, the State Clearinghouse assigned the environmental document the number of SCH No. 2005111025. All of the potential project impacts identified in the Initial Study are below a level of significance.

A description of the environmental determination for the Mitigated Negative Declaration (NOI/Initial Study) is contained in Attachment A, December 7, 2005 Planning Commission Staff Report.

On December 27, 2005, the City received a letter from the State of California Public Utilities Commission regarding the proposed project (Attachment C). The letter states the requirements of “at-grade” rail crossings and safety features required for railroad crossing. Since Anderson Street is already constructed with an overpass, there are no “at-grade” vehicular or pedestrian crossings. Therefore, no additional mitigation measures are required.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The financial impacts to the City in terms of property tax revenues and the cost of public services are not completely known at this time. However, staff estimates that the project (Phase I only) will generate well over \$1.1 million in Development Impact Fees to the City in addition to Building and Construction Plan Check and Permit fees.

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Planning Commission Report (December 7, 2005)
 - 1. Vicinity Map
 - 2. Project Plans (Site, Elevation, and Floor Plans)
 - 3. Mitigated Negative Declaration (NOI/Initial Study)
 - 4. Conditions of Approval (Not included)
- B. Conditions of Approval (Revised on December 7, 2005)
- C. Revised Site Plan
- D. Revised Landscape Plan
- E. Letter from the State of California Public Utilities Commission